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Baker-Polito Administration Designates New Priority River and Wetland Restoration Projects

BOSTON – December 7, 2016 - The Baker-Polito Administration today announced 11 new river and wetland restoration projects will be designated Priority Projects through the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER). Priority Projects, which are eligible to receive grants, project management and contracted technical services funded by DER, deliver significant ecological and community benefits to the Commonwealth.

"Our administration remains committed to working with our federal, municipal, and private partners to restore rivers, wetlands, and the valuable natural resources in systems throughout the Commonwealth," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "The revitalization of the state's rivers and the protection of floodplains demonstrates Massachusetts' dedication to preserving our natural ecosystems for wildlife and safeguarding local businesses who are reliant on a healthy environment."

"In addition to enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, these projects will create jobs and boost economic activity within local communities across the state," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "Importantly, by prioritizing and investing in these projects, considerable resources will be leveraged, ultimately making them more valuable, successful, and cost effective for the public to enjoy and benefit from."

The 11 new Priority Projects, six of which will receive "provisional" status in order to determine their long-term readiness for implementation, include dam removals, culvert replacements, urban river revitalization efforts, floodplain enhancement and streamflow restoration. Once completed, the projects will provide significant social, environmental and economic benefits to the Commonwealth and local communities. More than 60 active ecological restoration projects throughout the state are currently designated as Priority Projects. To review a full list of projects, please visit the Department of Fish & Game's [DER Priority Projects Map webpage](#).

"Given the stress that our rivers and wetlands continue to face due to the extended drought in Massachusetts, these restoration efforts could not come at a better time," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "Dam removal and culvert replacement are some examples of the important projects that have been prioritized to safeguard human health and safety by protecting buildings, roads, and other infrastructure."

"Ecological restoration projects benefit a range of wildlife species, particularly cold water fish such as eastern brook trout and migratory fish such as river herring, shad, and smelt," **said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner George N. Peterson, Jr.** "We are pleased to support restoration of these critical habitats in cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth."

The five new Priority Projects include:

Project: Ipswich River Flow Restoration

Applying Organization: Multiple municipalities in partnership with The Ipswich River Watershed Association

Project Description: The Ipswich River has been especially stressed by current drought conditions. This project will pilot innovative, non-regulatory water conservation strategies with the goal of reducing non-essential outdoor water use and improving streamflow.

Project: Elm Street Dam Removal

Applying Organization: Kingston in partnership with the Jones River Watershed Association

Project Description: The Jones River is an important migratory fish run with coldwater habitat in some of its tributaries. The dam removal project will eliminate a liability for the community and restore connectivity to over 24 miles of river habitat.

Project: Lyman Mill Dam Removal

Applying Organization: Southampton in partnership with a private owner

Project Description: Removal of the Lyman Mill Dam will eliminate a significant hazard dam and restore connectivity to 27 miles of river habitat along the Manhan River.

Project: Arcadia Sanctuary Floodplain Restoration

Applying Organization: Easthampton in partnership with Mass Audubon

Project Description: The restoration project will improve biodiversity and other floodplain wetland functions along the Mill River, a tributary to the Connecticut River.

Project: Pamet River Restoration

Applying Organization: Truro in partnership with the Town of Truro

Project Description: The Pamet River restoration will connect tidal habitat along the river and its tributaries to improve salt marsh condition and strengthen coastal resiliency.

The six new "Provisional" Priority Projects include:

Project: High Street Dam Removal

Applying Organization: Bridgewater in partnership with The Nature Conservancy

Project Description: The High Street Dam removal would reconnect over 10 miles of riverine habitat upstream of the dam and benefit a range of wildlife species.

Project: Kitchen Brook Dam Removal

Applying Organization: Town of Cheshire

Project Description: Removal of the Kitchen Brook Dam would benefit coldwater species and complements the recent removal of the adjacent Thunder Brook Dam.

Project: Sawmill Brook Restoration:

Applying Organization: Town of Manchester

Project Description: DER would assist the Town of Manchester with studies to evaluate infrastructure problems on Sawmill Brook to reduce flooding and improve habitat.

Project: Watertown Dam

Applying Organization: Watertown in partnership with The Charles River Watershed Association

Project Description: Removal of the Watertown Dam would eliminate a hazardous dam on the main stem of the Charles river and improve fish passage.

Project: Hollingsworth and Ames Pond Dams Removal

Applying Organization: Braintree in partnership with Fore River Watershed Association

Project Description: This project would involve the removal of two dams and associated channel improvements to restore fish passage in the Fore River system in tandem with the Division of Marine Fisheries.

Project: Fearing Brook Revitalization

Applying Organization: Town of Amherst

Project Description: The Fearing Brook restoration would include daylighting, stormwater improvements and other habitat enhancements to a highly impacted and urbanized stream.

"The Priority Projects Program is the primary vehicle by which the Division of Ecological Restoration pursues aquatic habitat restoration and river revitalization projects that present the greatest benefit to the Commonwealth – both ecologically and socially," **said DER Director Tim Purinton**. "These projects leverage significant federal funds, on average five federal dollars to every state dollar invested."

Priority Projects are evaluated on their ecological benefit, cost, size, practicality, feasibility, opportunity for public education and recreation, available program resources, and partner support, and are chosen through a state-wide, competitive process. The selection of projects begins when the DER issues a pre-Request for Responses (RFR). Eligible applicants include municipalities, private property owners, non-profits, and academic institutions. Additionally, selected projects are eligible to receive technical services such as data collection, engineering, design work, and permitting; project management and fundraising assistance from DER staff; and small grants.

"I am pleased to learn that the Lyman Mill Dam Removal project in Southampton and the Arcadia Sanctuary Floodplain Restoration project in Easthampton have been designated as Priority Projects by the Division of Ecological Restoration," **said Senator Don Humason (R-Westfield)**. "Thanks to DER's recognition of the benefits of these projects, both communities will be able to access exclusive technical supports and funding to revitalize local ecologies and improve public safety."

"We are thankful that the Arcadia Sanctuary Floodplain Restoration project has been recognized as a priority project. This recognition will open doors for funding and project management which will bring us one step closer to improving biodiversity along the Mill River," **said State Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley)**. "Grant funding coupled with our partnership with Mass Audubon will ensure this project is a successful one, benefiting not only our community but those along the Connecticut River."

"Completely cognizant of the persistent drought conditions that we have endured I'm particularly pleased that the Ipswich River Watershed Association was included as a priority project for their water conservation efforts," **said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**.

"Given what we have just witnessed throughout this past summer with the Ipswich River, the designation of the Ipswich River Flow Restoration in partnership with The Ipswich Watershed Association as a Priority Project by the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration is an encouraging step in the direction of rectifying the damage done to our ecosystem during the drought," **said State Representative Brad Hill (R-Ipswich)**.

The mission of the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) is to restore and protect the Commonwealth's rivers, wetlands, and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water, and

terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

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